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counterparty, and a preference profile is derived for the counterparty. The preference profiles of the parties and counterparties are analyzed to determine, for each potential pairing of party and counterparty, those providing a relatively close fit.

IN THE CLAIMS:

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Please cancel claims 18, 21, and 24.

Please amend claims 1-6, 17, 19, 20, 22, 23, 25, and 29 as follows. A marked up version of the amended claims is attached hereto.

Amended
1. (Amended) A method for facilitating evaluation, in connection with the procurement or delivery of products or services, in at least one of (i) a potential financial transaction and (ii) operation of an enterprise, each context involving a member of a first class of parties in a first role and a member of a second class of counterparties in a second role, the method comprising:

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a. obtaining for each of the parties in the first class and storing in a first digital storage medium responses from at least one of the party and a party co-evaluator to a first set of questions intended to reveal party preferences that can be used to estimate the closeness of such party's fit with a counterparty in such context;

b. obtaining for each of the counterparties in the second class and storing in a second digital storage medium responses from at least one of the

counterparty and a counterparty co-evaluator to a second set of questions intended to reveal counterparty preferences that can be used to estimate the closeness of such counterparty's fit with a party in such context;

c. deriving, in a first computer process, from the responses to the first set of questions for each such party, a first preference profile for each such party;

d. deriving, in a second computer process, from the responses to the second set of questions for each such counterparty, a second preference profile for each such counterparty;

e. for each party, analyzing, in a third computer process, the preference profile of such party in relation to the preference profiles of the counterparties to derive a first list of counterparties providing a relatively close fit between the preferences of each potential pairing of party and counterparty and communicating the first list to such party.

2. (Amended) A method according to claim 1, further comprising: for each counterparty, analyzing, in a fourth computer process, the preference profile of such counterparty in relation to the preference profiles of the parties to derive a second list of parties providing a relatively close fit between the preferences of each potential pairing of party and counterparty and communicating the second list to such counterparty.

3. (Amended) A method according to claim 1, wherein the first list is ranked according to the closeness of fit.

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4. (Amended) A method according to claim 2, wherein the second list is ranked according to the closeness of fit.

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5. (Amended) A method according to claim 1, wherein obtaining responses from each of the parties is accomplished using communication over a communication network.

6. (Amended) A method according to claim 1, wherein obtaining responses from each of the counterparties is accomplished using communication over a communication network.

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17. (Amended) A method according to claim 16, wherein the preference profile of each counterparty associates, with each level of each of a second series of attributes that complements the first series of attributes, a utility value to indicate the value which the counterparty places on each level of the attribute.

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19. (Amended) A method according to claim 1, wherein each party co-evaluator is one of: (i) an associate of the party, (ii) a member of a group to which the party belongs, wherein the group is relevant to such context, (iii) a parent or guardian of the party, (iv) an advisor to the party, (iv) a relative of the party, and (v) a friend of the party.

20. (Amended) A method according to claim 1, wherein each counterparty co-evaluator is one of: (i) an associate of the counterparty, (ii) a member of a group to which the counterparty belongs, wherein the group is relevant to such context, (iii) a parent or guardian of the counterparty, (iv) an advisor to the

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counterparty, (iv) a relative of the counterparty, and (v) a friend of the counterparty.

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22. (Amended) An apparatus for facilitating evaluation, in connection with the procurement or delivery of products or services, in at least one of (i) a potential financial transaction and (ii) operation of an enterprise, each context involving a member of a first class of parties in a first role and a member of a second class of counterparties in a second role, the apparatus comprising:

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a. a first computer process, in communication with a first digital storage medium, for obtaining for each of the parties in the first class and storing in the first digital storage medium responses from at least one of the party and a party co-evaluator to a first set of questions intended to reveal party preferences that can be used to estimate the closeness of such party's fit with a counterparty in such context;

b. a second computer process, in communication with a second digital storage medium, for obtaining for each of the counterparties in the second class and storing in the second digital storage medium responses from at least one of the counterparty and a counterparty co-evaluator to a second set of questions intended to reveal counterparty preferences that can be used to estimate the closeness of such counterparty's fit with a party such context;

c. a third computer process for deriving from the responses to the first set of questions for each such party a first preference profile for each such party;

d. a fourth computer process for deriving from the responses to the second set of questions for each such counterparty a second preference profile for each such counterparty; and

e. a fifth computer process for analyzing the preference profile of each party in relation to the preference profiles of the counterparties to derive a list of counterparties providing a relatively close fit between the preferences of each potential pairing of party and counterparty, and communicating the list to such party.

23. (Amended) An apparatus for facilitating evaluation, in connection with the procurement or delivery of products or services in at least one of (i) a potential financial transaction and (ii) operation of an enterprise, each context involving a member of a first class of parties in a first role and a member of a second class of counterparties in a second role, the apparatus comprising:

a. a first question and response module, in communication with a first digital storage medium, for obtaining for each of the parties in the first class and storing in the first digital storage medium responses from at least one of the party and a party co-evaluator to a first set of questions intended to reveal party preferences that can be used to estimate the closeness of such party's fit with a counterparty in such context;

b. a second question and response module, in communication with a second digital storage medium, for obtaining for each of the counterparties in the second class and storing in the second digital storage medium responses from at

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least one of the counterparty and a counterparty co-evaluator to a second set of questions intended to reveal counterparty preferences that can be used to estimate the closeness of such counterparty's fit with a party in such context;

- c. a first profile processor for deriving from the responses to the first set of questions for each such party a first preference profile for each such party;
- d. a second profile processor for deriving from the responses to the second set of questions for each such counterparty a second preference profile for each such counterparty; and
- e. a closeness-of-fit analyzer for analyzing the preference profile of each party in relation to the preference profiles of the counterparties to derive a list of counterparties providing a relatively close fit between the preferences of each potential pairing of party and counterparty, and communicating the list to such party.

25. (Amended) A method of structuring a database to facilitate evaluation, in connection with the procurement or delivery of products or services, in at least one of (i) a potential financial transaction and (ii) operation of an enterprise, each context involving a member of a first class of parties in a first role and a member of a second class of counterparties in a second role, the method comprising:

- a. obtaining for each of the parties in the first class and storing in a first data record in a first digital storage medium responses from at least one of the party and a party co-evaluator to a first set of questions intended to reveal party

preferences that can be used to estimate the closeness of such party's fit with a counterparty in such context;

b. obtaining for each of the counterparties in the second class and storing in a second data record in a second digital storage medium responses from at least one of the counterparty and a counterparty co-evaluator to a second set of questions intended to reveal counterparty preferences that can be used to estimate the closeness of such counterparty's fit with a party in such context;

c. deriving, in a first computer process, from the responses to the first set of questions for each such party a first preference profile for each such party, and storing the first preference profile in a third data record in a third digital storage medium;

d. deriving, in a second computer process, from the responses to the second set of questions for each such counterparty a second preference profile for each such counterparty, and storing the second preference profile in a fourth data record in a fourth digital storage medium;

e. for each party, analyzing, in a third computer process, the preference profile of such party in relation to the preference profiles of the counterparties to derive a first list of counterparties providing a relatively close fit between the preferences of each potential pairing of party and counterparty and storing the first list in a fifth data record in a fifth digital storage medium.

29. (Amended) An apparatus for structuring a database, in connection with the procurement or delivery of products or services, in at least one of (i) a

potential financial transaction and (ii) operation of an enterprise, each context involving a member of a first class of parties in a first role and a member of a second class of counterparties in a second role, the apparatus comprising:

a. a first question and response module, in communication with a first digital storage medium, for obtaining for each of the parties in the first class and storing in a first data record in the first digital storage medium responses from at least one of the party and a party co-evaluator to a first set of questions intended to reveal party preferences that can be used to estimate the closeness of such party's fit with a counterparty in such context;

b. a second question and response module, in communication with a second digital storage medium, for obtaining for each of the counterparties in the second class and storing in a second data record in the second digital storage medium responses from at least one of the counterparty and a counterparty co-evaluator to a second set of questions intended to reveal counterparty preferences that can be used to estimate the closeness of such counterparty's fit with a party in such context;

c. a first profile processor for deriving from the responses to the first set of questions for each such party a first preference profile for each such party, and storing the first preference profile in a third data record in a third digital storage medium;

d. a second profile processor for deriving from the responses to the second set of questions for each such counterparty a second preference profile for

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each such counterparty, and storing the second preference profile in a fourth data record in a fourth digital storage medium; and

e. a closeness-of-fit analyzer for analyzing the preference profile of each party in relation to the preference profiles of the counterparties to derive a list of counterparties providing a relatively close fit between the preferences of each potential pairing of party and counterparty, and storing the list in a fifth data record in a fifth digital storage medium.

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REMARKS

1. Claims 1-29 were pending in this application. Claims 18, 21, and 24 have been canceled. Claims 1-6, 17, 19, 20, 22, 23, 25, and 29 have been amended. No new claims have been added. Therefore, claims 1-17, 19, 20, 22, 23, and 25-29 are pending in this application.

2. During a telephone conversation between the Examiner and Mr. Keith Wood on September 10, 2002, a provisional election was made without traverse to prosecute the invention of Group I, claims 1-17, 22, 23, and 25-29.

Claims 18, 21, and 24 have been canceled. Claims 19 and 20 have been amended so as to be dependent upon amended claim 1. Applicant respectfully submits that the restriction requirement is made moot by the cancellation of claims 18, 21, and 24 and by the above claim amendments.

3. The Examiner rejected claims 1, 3, 5-13, 16, 17, 22, 23, and 25-29 under 35 U.S.C. 102(e) as being anticipated by Puram et al, U.S. Patent No. 6,289,340 B1 (hereinafter Puram).

The Examiner also rejected claims 2, 4, 14, and 15 under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Puram and CareerMosaic.